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Contact: Cindy Wood (202)208-4989

Secretary Norton Designates the Fresno Sanitary Landfill In California as a National Historic Landmark

WASHINGTON-- Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton today announced the designation of the Fresno Sanitary Landfill in Fresno, Calif., as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). The Fresno Sanitary Landfill is one of 15 sites recommended to the Secretary by the National Park System Advisory Board for their national significance in American history and culture.

The 15 new NHLs also include the Sheldon Jackson School, Sitka, Alaska; Samuel Wadsworth Russell House, Middletown, Conn.; Nicholas Jarrot Mansion, Cahokia, Ill.; S.R. Crown Hall, Chicago, Ill.; J.C. Lore Oyster House, Solomons, Md.; Gibson House, Boston, Mass.; Dutch Reformed Church, Newburgh, N.Y.; *Modesty*, West Sayville, N.Y.; Rudolph Oyster House, West Sayville, N.Y.; Bethania Historic District, Bethania, N.C.; Merchants' Exchange Building, Philadelphia, Pa.; Randolph Field Historic District, Bexar County, Texas; New Kent School and George W. Watkins School, New Kent County, Va.; and John Philip Sousa Jr. High School, Washington, D.C.

"These special sites underscore our heritage and tell stories of periods and events in our history," Norton said. "By preserving these unique sites, we share our culture and rich diversity with our children for future generations to learn from."

NHLs are identified by theme and special studies prepared or overseen by National Park Service (NPS) historians and archaeologists. The NPS often conducts NHL studies in partnership with federal, state, tribal or local preservation officials; the academic community; independent scholars; and others knowledgeable about a particular subject.

"National Historic Landmarks guide us in comprehending important trends and patterns in American history," said Mainella. "The Fresno Sanitary Landfill possesses those exceptional qualities that help us as a Nation illuminate and understand trends in emerging and developing technology."

The Fresno Sanitary Landfill was opened in 1937 and closed in 1987. It is the oldest "true" sanitary landfill in the United States, and the oldest compartmentalized municipal landfill in the western United States, holding the service record of more than 50 years of continuous operation. It is the first landfill to employ the trench method of disposal and the first to utilize compaction. At the Fresno site, the layering of refuse and dirt in trenches, compacting the dirt and refuse, and then covering the filled areas daily to minimize rodent and debris problems represented the technique adopted by the builders of modern sanitary landfills, and thus represented a "true" sanitary landfill, not simply a modification on older land-dumping methods.

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Most NHLs are owned by private individuals or groups. Others are owned by local, state, tribal, or federal government agencies, or may have mixed public-private ownership. Owners of NHLs are free to manage their property as they choose, provided no federal license, permit, or funding is involved. The owner agrees to observe simple preservation precepts with respect to the property and receives technical advice and assistance from preservation experts if needed.

Landmark designation offers advantages to owners who wish to preserve their properties. A bronze plaque bearing the name of the NHL and attesting to its national significance is presented to the owner upon request. NHL owners may be able to obtain federal historic preservation funding, when funds are available, and federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation as well as other provisions may apply.

The historic importance of potential landmarks is evaluated by the NPS and by the National Park System Advisory Board during meetings held twice a year that are open to the public. The Advisory Board includes citizens who are national and community leaders in the conservation of natural, historic, and cultural areas. Recommendations by the Advisory Board are made to the Secretary of the Interior on potential NHLs. Final decisions regarding NHL designations are made by the Secretary. Additional information on the National Historic Landmark program can be found on the NPS website at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/landmarks.htm>, or by contacting Carol Shull at (202)343-9504 or John Sprinkle at (202) 343-8166.

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